

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ADOPTIONS

This brochure is intended to provide you with procedural information concerning adoptions. Please be aware that Virginia law forbids the Clerks Office staff from providing legal advice. Accordingly, the Norfolk Circuit Court Clerks Office does not supply forms or other documents in connection with filing for an adoption. You are responsible for preparing the necessary documentation. In addition, Virginia only recognizes statutory adoptions, so the requirements of the Code of Virginia must be followed carefully. **Therefore, we strongly suggest that you hire an attorney to help you in your adoption proceeding.** The Clerks Office cannot recommend specific attorneys, but you may call:

The Virginia Lawyers Referral Service
1-800-552-7977

or

The Norfolk & Portsmouth Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service
757-623-0132

If you decide to represent yourself, you will be expected to follow the same procedures as an attorney.

Types of Adoptions:

There are several types of adoptions recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The following is a list of the different types of adoptions, each of which has different filing and procedural requirements. Please consult the Code to insure that your filing is complete and complies with all the requirements for the type of adoption that you are seeking.

The primary sections of the Code of Virginia are found at §63.2-1200 – 63.2-1248 but note that there are other requirements throughout the Virginia Code that might apply. The Adoption chapter of the Virginia Code is set forth with an article providing general provisions applicable in all types of adoption and the specific provisions applicable to specific types of placements. You may find these sections in the Virginia Code as follows:

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| • AGENCY ADOPTION | §63.2-1221 - 63.2-1229 |
| • PARENTAL PLACEMENT ADOPTION | §63.2-1230 - 63.2-1240 |
| • STEPPARENT ADOPTION | §63.2-1241 - 63.2-1242 |
| • ADULT ADOPTION | §63.2-1243 -63.2-1244 |

- **FOREIGN ADOPTIONS/RE-ADOPTIONS** §63.2-1210
- **CERTIFICATE OF FOREIGN BIRTH – WITHOUT RE-ADOPTION** §63.2-1220

If the adoptee is being placed from another state or if the child is coming from another country and the adoption has not been final, you may be in violation of the law. As a result your adoption may be effected if you do not follow the Interstate Compact on the Placement of the Children. See Virginia Code §63.2-1000 and 63.2-1100 – 63.2-1105. The telephone number for the appropriate office in Virginia's Department of Social Services is (804) 692-1274.

Required Documents:

Although the filing requirements vary depending upon the type of adoption sought, the following documents are always required.

1. A **signed**, notarized Petition plus two (2) copies. (Additional copies are required if service of Process or Publication is necessary; or if you request a date-stamped copy of the documents you file.)
2. An order of reference referring the case to an adoption agency.
3. A **signed** proposed Final Order to submit for a Judge's signature. Copies of Orders are not required.
4. A **completed** VS-21 form. This is a statistical "Report of Adoption" form that is required for all adoptions. It is available from the Clerks Office. (If this is an Agency adoption, the Agency will forward this form to the Court.)
5. A **completed** VS-6 form and a check in the amount of \$12.00 made payable to Vital Records. This form is ***required if a new Birth Certificate is requested for person's born in Virginia or a foreign country.*** In addition with the VS-6 form a copy of your picture I.D. or a copy of two secondary forms of identification in accordance with the Office of Vital Records Primary Documents or Secondary Documents list must be included with your application. A list of the primary and secondary documents may be accessed through the internet at: <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/vitalrec/primary.asp> Upon entry of the final order of adoption, the VS6 application, copies of the identification and fee will be forwarded to Vital Records.
6. Any evidence, exhibits or documentation in support of the Petition, plus two (2) copies. A copy of the marriage license and birth certificate are required for

step-parent adoptions. (NOTE: additional copies must be submitted if Service or Publication is required; or if you would like date-stamped copies.)

7. A self-addressed, stamped envelope for **each** set of documents you would like to have returned to you by the Clerk 's Office (including date-stamped copies of filings and/or certified copies of Orders).

Preparing Your Petition:

Every petition will vary in content, depending upon the type of adoption sought; however, all Petitions must include the following information:

- Either the child's birth name **or** the legal name by which the child will be known after adoption **and** birth certificate number (if the birth name is not used, the petition must include a request to change the child's name).
- The signatures of both the husband and wife, if you are married.
- A statement of residence.
- The child 's date and place of birth.
- The date the child began living with the petitioners.
- Full disclosure of the circumstances under which the child came to live with you. (§63.2-1201)
- A statement that you are financially able to support the child; are in suitable mental and physical health to care for the child; and are morally suitable to raise the child. (§63.2-1209 -63.2-1210)
- A description of any supporting documents that are attached to the Petition, if applicable with each exhibit lettered or numbered.
- A prayer (request) for the Courts permission to adopt the child (and to change the child's name, if applicable).

Remember this list only includes the information necessary in all adoptions.

Additional information may be required for certain types of adoptions. Please consult the Virginia Code carefully to ensure you include all the necessary information in your Petition before you file.

**IF YOU CHOOSE TO REPRESENT YOURSELF, PLEASE
REMEMBER:**

- The Clerk/Court **cannot** advise or represent you.
- Your documents must be typed, double-spaced on 8 1/2" by 11" white paper.
- All documents should include your adoption case number.
- If you send any documents to the Court, mail them to:
Clerk of the Circuit Court
100 St. Paul's Boulevard
Norfolk VA 23510
Attn: Chancery Division
- All hand carried documents should be delivered to the Clerk 's Office of the Circuit Court, Chancery Division, 100 St. Paul's Boulevard, Norfolk VA 23510.

To check the status of your case, please call Chancery Division of the Norfolk Circuit Court Clerk's Office at (757) 664-4382.

Please have your case number available for reference.

PARENTAL PLACEMENT:

If a child has been placed by a birth parent directly to you, then your case probably should start in an appropriate Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court for a determination of birth parent rights and other matters. This applies even to close relative cases except in cases of certain close relatives where the adoptee has lived in the home for a period of three years.

**FOREIGN ADOPTIONS AND ESTABLISHING CERTIFICATES OF
FOREIGN BIRTH:**

There are specific time requirements concerning when you file your petition and have your supervising agency visit you. See Virginia Code §63.2-1210.

Some countries issue guardianship (i.e. Korea), while other countries issue final decrees of adoption (i.e. Russia, China, Guatemala). Many people readopt despite having a final decree from a foreign country so that the adoption is universally recognized throughout Virginia and the United States pursuant to the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the U. S. Constitution.

Readoption allows you to obtain a Virginia Certificate of Foreign Birth.

Alternatively, you may obtain a Certificate of Foreign Birth in some cases without pursuing a re-adoption. While this procedure may not provide the protection of a re-adoption, it may allow your child to more quickly obtain a Virginia Certificate of Foreign Birth and change of name. The requirements for this procedure are in Virginia Code 63.2-1220. The Court maintains these files with adoption cases to provide confidentiality.

Establishing Certificate of Foreign Birth Filing fee: \$69.00

Required Documents:

A notarized Petition requesting the Court to grant a "Report of Adoption" - plus 2 copies
Immediate Relative Immigrant Visa (IR-3)

A completed Report of Adoption (VS-21 form)

Completed post-adoption reports

The notarized petition or affidavit must state that any outstanding post-adoption requirements shall be met as required by the foreign country. The affidavit shall also include the name by which the child is to be known.

A proposed final Order to submit for a Judge's signature.

Guidelines and Requirements for filing of Adoption or Readoption:

1. Adoption proceedings are filed in the Chancery Division of the Norfolk Circuit Court Clerk's Office located at 100 St. Paul's Boulevard, Norfolk VA 23510.
2. Either you or the placing agency **must** be a resident of the City of Norfolk. (§63.2-1201)
3. All filings must be signed.
4. All Petitions and Orders must be typed, double-spaced on 8 1/2" by 11" white paper and should have the heading:
VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE CITY OF NORFOLK
5. All filings should include your current address and telephone number.
6. All Circuit Court fees must be paid by: cash, certified check, in-state personal checks or money order.

Code of Virginia Reference: §63.2-1200 – 63.2-1248

Fees:

Filing fee:	\$34.00
Copies from the case file:	\$.50 per page
Certifications:	\$ 2.00 per document
Service of Process:	\$12.00 per party for service by the Sheriff.

Certified checks or money orders should be payable to: **Clerk of the Circuit Court**

PUBLICATION

If Publication is required, then an Affidavit for Service by Publication and Order of Publication must be submitted. The Order must be published for four consecutive weeks. At the time of filing, submit to the Circuit Court, the original affidavit and the original Order of a publication. In addition you must submit a completed certified or registered mailing form and an envelope addressed to the last known address of the person you are serving through publication.

Petitioner must pay for the Order to be published in a local newspaper. The Court currently utilizes the Virginia Business Observer and The Virginian Pilot.

You may have the Order published in any other newspaper with local circulation that has met qualifications in accordance with §8.01-324 of the Code of Virginia.

You are to contact the respective publications to determine the advertising fee for publication. Your payment should be made payable to the newspaper and not to the Clerk's Office

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When filing your case, make sure that you receive and retain your case number. This number will begin with the letter "A" and should be referenced when calling the Court. The phone number you should call if you need information on your case is: 757-664-4382.

Adoption files are sealed due to the confidentiality of the proceedings. Pursuant to §63.2-1245 "adoption files shall be made available to attorney of record, social service officials, court officials, and to such other persons as the circuit court shall direct in specific cases by order of the circuit court entered in accordance with §63.2-1246".

If you file additional paperwork, other than Orders, later in the case, remember you will need to include an original and two (2) copies. If Service or Publication is required, you will need to provide additional copies (one for each Service). The case number should always be included on any subsequent filings.

It is your responsibility to advise the Clerks Office when all paperwork is completed and an Order is to be sent to a Judge for review and signature.

You are encouraged to keep a "date-stamped " copy of all paperwork filed with the Clerks Office. To receive a date-stamped copy of a filing, please include your request in the cover letter accompanying the original document. You must also provide the Clerks Office with a copy of the document to be returned to you, as well as a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Under Virginia law, you are entitled to one (1) free certified copy of the FINAL ORDER. You are required to pay for all other copies. If you would like the Final Order mailed, you must provide the Clerks Office with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

After six (6) months from the entry of the final order, if no appeal is filed with the Court of Appeals challenging the Final Order, the validity of the adoption cannot be attacked later in accordance with §63.2-1216.

TO RECEIVE A COPY OF A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

For person's born in Virginia or person's born in a foreign country and were readopted in a Virginia Court:

- Complete an application for Certification of a Vital Record (VS6).
- A fee in the amount of \$12.00 for each birth certificate requested payable to: Division of Vital Records or Vital Records.
- A copy of your picture I.D. or a copy of two secondary forms of identification in accordance with the Office of Vital Records Primary Documents or Secondary Documents list must be included with your application. A list of the primary and secondary documents may be accessed through the internet at: www.vdh.state.va.us/vitalrec/primary.htm
- The VS6 application, copy of your identification and fee payable to
- Division of Vital Records may be filed with the Petition for
- Adoption.
- Upon entry of the final order of adoption, the VS6 application and fee will be forwarded to Vital Records.

For person's born in the United States but outside the Commonwealth of Virginia:

- To receive a certified birth certificate you would need to contact the Vital Records of the specific state the individual was born.

- A listing of all Vital Records in the United States may be accessed through the internet at: <http://www.usavital.com>
- Let the other state know this is an adoption since there may be special procedures and fees applicable.
- A new birth certificate is created replacing the original.
- Please be patient since it may take six (6) months or longer in Virginia and other states to issue the new birth certificate.

TYPES OF ORDERS

ORDER OF REFERENCE §63.2-1208

The Order of Reference refers the case to an adoption agency and notifies the agency to begin an investigative home study. In Stepparent cases this is usually the Department of Social Services – Norfolk Division. In other cases it is usually the Virginia agency that placed the child or supervised the case. The agency has 90 days to complete its report and return it to the Court. The Order of Reference must name the agency to which the case is being referred, as well as the agency's location and additionally must include the Commissioner of Social Services. Often, this is the first Order signed in the proceeding.

INTERLOCUTORY ORDER §63.2-1209 – 63.2-1211

The Interlocutory Order is a temporary adoption order, which sets forth that the adoptive parents are the parents of their child and are subject to a probationary period. The Interlocutory Order directs the supervising agency to conduct further visits with you and then report back to the Court. Although not every adoption requires an Interlocutory Order, generally this is the second Order to be signed. In cases of a direct placement adoption this is the first Order in the adoption proceeding.

FINAL ORDER §63.2-1213

The Final Order terminates the rights (and responsibilities/obligations) of the birth or previous adoptive parents and awards the adoption to the petitioning adoptive parents. The Final Order should not be submitted until 21 days **after** the Court has received the Report of Investigation, if applicable. This is the last Order to be signed. In some cases, it may be the only Order.

Please consult the Virginia Code to determine which Order(s) are appropriate for your particular case.

REFERENCE MATERIALS:

The following reference materials, which are available in the Law Library, may be useful to you when researching your case. When doing research, remember that the law may have changed since the resource you are using was published; so always check the Code and the pocket parts for amendments. Also, please bear in mind that the librarians may not offer you any legal advice.

Code of Virginia 1950, as amended. Sections 63.2-1200 through 63.2-1248, Volume 9A.

Adoption Procedures and Forms: A Guide for Virginia Lawyers, Norfolk, VA: Virginia Law Foundation, 1998.

Brinig, Margaret F. ***Virginia Domestic Relations Handbook***, 3d ed. Charlottesville: Michie, 1996.

Gouldman, W. Clyde and Barbara Wright Goshorn. ***Virginia Forms***, Vol. 1, Charlottesville: Michie, 1995.

Swisher, Peter N., Lawrence D Diehl, and James R. Cottrell. ***Virginia Family Law***, 2d ed. Norcross, GA: The Harrison Company Publishers, 1997.

Virginia Practice Manual, Domestic Relations Section, Virginia Poverty Law Center, 1994.